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SERMONS,
ON THE
Liturgy of the Church of England;
WITH
INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSES
ON
PUBLIC WORSHIP AND FORMS OF PRAYER.

ORIGINALLY PREACHED
IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH, COBOURG.

BY THE REV. A. N. BETHUNE,

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TO THE
HONORABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

CHARLES JAMES

LORD BISHOP OF QUEBEC;

WITH THE MOST SINCERE RESPECT FOR

HIS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CHARACTER;

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS,

PUBLISHED WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S SANCTION

AND FURTHERED BY HIS PATRONAGE,

ARE, WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S PERMISSION,

MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

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*** Copies of this Work may be had on application to the Author, or at the principal Book Stores in Montreal, Kingston and York.*

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

MATTHEW XVII. 4.

It is good for us to be here.

THIS was a natural exclamation of the astonished disciple upon beholding the sudden transfiguration of his beloved Master, and upon seeing Moses and Elias, the most illustrious of the Jewish fathers, reappear to acknowledge and pay homage to that "glory which he had before the world began."—"Let us make three tabernacles"—that far from the world, its persecutions and its snares, we may enjoy your blessed presence here forever ; in the awe and wonder so suddenly awakened, "not knowing what he said." We must not, however, be surprised at this transport of feeling on an occasion so wonderful : it was perhaps not unnatural, at this moment of excitement, that he should have proposed some memento of this meeting of beatified spirits with the Son of God, and have sought to declare, by a visible memorial, that this place was consecrated by the appearance of the divine glory and the sound of the divine voice.

Similar to these were the feelings of the patriarch Jacob when the promises of God, announced to him in a dream, caused him to exclaim, "how dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."—"It is good for me to be here," was doubtless the sentiment which accompanied the spontaneous resolution to erect some standing memorial to that God who vouchsafed his protection and promised his blessing.

So thought and spake the Israelites when the light which overhung the Cherubim gave token of the presence of Jehovah:—"it is good for us to draw near unto God," for counsel in our difficulties and solace in our wanderings.

From the beginning of time the Almighty was thus approached with reverence and praise. Before the world was formed or man created, He received the adoration of the "morning stars," the joyful shouts of the "sons of God;"* and the book of the Revelations records that these spirits of the skies "rest not day or night" in extolling the Majesty of the Lord of Hosts.

Upon the formation of Adam, the word of divine wisdom said, "It is not good for man to be alone." His sympathetic nature pants for communication of delight and craves the joys of equal fellowship; and until Eve was created to share with him the happiness of Paradise—until there was a kindred voice to join in the tribute of thanksgiving to the God of all goodness—the strain of devotion and the hymn of praise wanted half their fervency and beauty.

Through long successions of ages was this pious worship of the Deity maintained. The house of God was the delight of the devout men of old. They knew no joy equal to the happiness of a free and frequent resort to it—insomuch that when the holy

* Job, xxxviii. 7.

Psalmist was under the greatest of personal distresses; when his children rebelled, his friends deserted and his enemies reviled him, he felt no distress so deeply as his banishment from the House of God. "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord's house; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God," was his pathetic cry in those days of his affliction. "Let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill and thy tabernacles—I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God."

Thus, too, exclaims the devout Daniel in behalf of the ruined sanctuary, "O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate." "Thy servants," cried the Israelites in the cheerless days of their captivity, "take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof." They revered the very ruins of the house of God and loved the fallen "gates of Zion more than all the dwellings" of Babylon.

Even the degenerate Jews in the time of our Saviour reckoned it a peculiar calamity and one of the chief miseries to which they were subject from their capricious conquerors, that they should be "put out of the synagogue."

Shall Christians, then, "called to an holy calling" and "purified to be a peculiar people"—shall we who can unite with a sense of God's providential goodness the contemplation of his "inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ"—shall we not confess, when assembled in the courts of the Lord's house, **IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE?** Here, with a belief in his presence and a confidence in his superintending care, we have dedicated a tabernacle to the Most High God: and "it is good for us to be here," to repent us of our sins—to implore His pardon—and, with the voice of thanksgiving, to

"declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men."

"From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts;" and do we not witness the gradual and sure, though slow, fulfilment of this prophetic declaration? Although the "Sun of Righteousness," in his glorious career, may not yet have reached his meridian; and although the beams which illuminate us are still unseen by the larger portion of the human race; yet are we not warranted, by our own experience and observation, in believing that, in its progressive march, it will quickly dispel the clouds which yet benight the understandings of men? Yes; for it is not long since these scenes, now blessed with the due administration of the Word and ordinances, were animated only by the yell of the savage or the howl of the beast of prey: it is not long since no solitary trace of civilization broke in upon the wildness of these woods; since the step of humanized man startled away the fierce tenants of the forest. But lately, superstition might here have held her orgies and the Spirit of darkness claimed his bleeding victim—but lately, the unmeaning or the dreadful rites of paganism transmitted from erring fathers to their untaught sons, the wanderers of the woods, might have told that here the Gospel of Peace had not yet conveyed its "glad-tidings." But now the aspect of things is changed—from the "morning spread upon the mountains," we hail the resplendent rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

Here the cross is reared, that the afflicted penitent—as did the wounded Jews to the brazen serpent—may look up thereto and be healed. Here a temple is erected to the Most High God, where the recovered sufferer from temporal and spiritual distresses may "pay his vows in the presence of all His people."

Here an altar is raised, where the soldier and servant

of Christ may renew his allegiance to the Captain of his salvation, and partaking of the symbols of his dying Master's love, may seal anew the bond of his own forgiveness.

For the honor of the Lord of Hosts this temple hath been erected—to His service it hath been consecrated. But as the mere statue unanimated by a soul within, unvisited by that "spark of heavenly flame" which shines forth in the graces of the mind and the affections of the heart, cannot long be engaging; so, vain and uninteresting is the mere edifice in which is not fulfilled all the intent of its appropriation—which resounds not with the praises of that God to whom it is dedicated—which is not filled with the "incense" of a contrite spirit, nor witness to the "pure offering" of the heart and soul and strength to the service of Jehovah. The gold could not sanctify the temple: so not all the pomp of external decoration can hallow the edifices we raise for the worship of the Deity; but that pure and infinite Spirit which, although "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," yet deigns to visit the lowly fabrics which human hands have reared—He must there be **WORSHIPPED** in spirit and in truth." The glow of piety quickened by the common tribute of devotion—the flame of charity increasing with the general voice of prayer and intercession—love to God and love to man, through the merits of a crucified Redeemer, animating the hearts of assembled worshipers—this is the "incense" which must breathe throughout the Christian temple; this is the "offering" which must be made in the Christian sanctuary!

For such a purpose, it is surely "good for us to be here"—to "exalt the Lord in the congregation of the people and to praise him in the assembly of the elders:" it is right "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, in the courts of the Lords house."

Besides the silent and secret devotion of the heart, there remains upon us an obligation to associate together in the worship of Almighty God—to make a public confession of thankfulness; a general acknowledgment of unworthiness; a common supplication for mercy. The grateful heart loves to give vent to its emotions; and, certainly, those blessings which are received in common it becomes a community jointly to acknowledge. Man is, in every thing, a social creature; he seeks for sympathy in his passions and looks for fellowship in his occupations. If, then, in lighter services and in humbler engagements, such a conjunction be a dictate of nature and have the commendation of expediency, a similar union in the duties of devotion is, at least, as becoming and as profitable. A communication of counsels forwards the common interest; so a union in the exercises of praise and prayer may further their design because it serves to increase their earnestness—according to the similitude of the wise man that “iron sharpeneth iron.” For, who is there that can frequent the consecrated house of Almighty God—if he possess any claim to the sensibility which human nature is proud to acknowledge—without being touched and affected by the solemnity of the scene presented there? Can he view, with indifference, the prostrate worshippers of the Lord of heaven and earth? Can he listen unmoved to their mingled voices of humble supplication? Can he hear, without emotion, the common profession of thankfulness and the loud tributes of praise? Such a scene cannot but call home the wandering thoughts and truant passions, and fix all the intensity of both on the omnipotent object of this general worship. It must bring to recollection the majesty of that Being to whom the mind too seldom may look up thither, and be received. It is erected to the Most High God. It turns—awaken a conviction of the goodness which has so long foreborne to punish the rebellious sinner—and lead the soul to reflection, to contrition, to prayer and to praise.

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And—as a natural influence upon the passions and practices of men which a participation in these solemn services is calculated to produce—must not the revengeful and the malicious be moved to dismiss their unholy passions when the prayer for mutual blessings is breathing all around them? Can they view even the object of cherished hatred, in the attitude of humility and with the aspect of devotion, imploring the divine mercy upon their enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and not feel a desire to be “reconciled unto their brother?” No: these public and mingled offerings cannot but cement the union of the Christian brotherhood. They forcibly remind us that, in the sight of God, we are all children of a common family—an impression of softening and holy influence, which will bend the arrogant to humility of mind, and cause the household of the faith to be “all one in Christ Jesus.”

We are commanded, “as we have opportunity, to do good unto all men;” but if we cannot fulfil this injunction by *acts* of benevolence, we may become their benefactors by intercessions to Almighty God on their behalf. The prayer for “all sorts and conditions of men,” if made with sincerity, “availeth much;” and its acceptance may bring down help to the needy, spiritual conviction to the luke-warm, and heavenly comfort to the wretched. We may be deficient in worldly means to relieve the necessitous; yet the poorest may, by their intercessions to Almighty God, prove benefactors to the richest—the meanest to the highest—the weakest to the mightiest.

Let us, therefore, my Brethren, “not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” *As the manner of some is*—I repeat the Apostle’s accusation. For are there none who are unimpressed by the motives and insensible to the obligations thus to assemble themselves together? none who neglect the “means of grace” and have

but a cold respect to the "hope of glory?" none who are slow to "enter the gates of the Lord with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise?" Is worldly business—is the eager desire of a gain which is as fleeting as it is worthless, never permitted to detach from that divinely enjoined and ever to be recommended duty? Are private affairs never suffered to intrude upon that paramount obligation, and cause those hours which God claims to himself to be employed in the selfish business of man? Is a feeling of idleness—the desire of the dull repose which prompts this unmanly language, "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep"—never permitted to overcome a weak but better impulse to obey the ordinances of God and "fulfil all righteousness?" Is the chill of indifference never suffered to still the faint risings of piety, nor the torpor of insensibility to freeze up the fountains of devotional feeling?

Are excuses never made for neglecting and omitting this duty which would not be proposed, if the summons were from the world and not from God—if the call were from interest, pleasure and passion, and not from the voice of heaven, the language of saints and angels, and the blessedness of a future world? But how strange is this infatuation! We must condemn it, though we may not discard it; we must charge upon it all the absurdity of inconsistency, all the madness of folly, although we still cling to the baneful evil. But, my Brethren, let it undergo your severest scrutiny, that the thorough conviction of the judgment may shame the opposing impulses of the heart—that reason may assert her dominion and the spirit scorn the authority of the flesh—that the mind too long enticed, flattered and enslaved, may vindicate its pre-eminence over the body. If the prospect of some worldly advantage, some accession to your honor amongst mankind, some increase to your for-

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tune should invite your attention and claim your exertions, you would not heed the pains and trouble which would secure the prize. You would not regard as insurmountable obstacles the inconveniencies of distance and fatigue—you would rather condemn your idleness and irresolution if your dread of these light impediments should cause the loss of those advantages which a little energy and perseverance might have compassed. But if the promises of present interest claim so much regard, how much more earnest and persevering should be the struggle for a "future and eternal weight of glory?" With what assiduity should we not labor to compass that end which is to render even our earthly pilgrimage pleasant and peaceful, sanctifying its joys and alleviating its sorrows; and which, more than all, is to give us hope on the bed of death and the confidence of reward at the day of judgment?

But all these are views and arguments too closely allied to the selfish passions of degraded beings. For, can it be that interest alone is the mover of every such impulse—that the hope of future reward is *all* the incitement for being diligent in God's service? Imperfect beings will ever *associate* that with their reasons for "not being slothful" in this great "business;" yet we must not suffer it to be the only cause for doing the will of our Father in heaven. We must summon up the better feelings, the more generous passions of humanity and league them into the holy cause which prompts this labor and this diligence. We should regard, as the most powerful incitement to the cheerful worship of God, the atoning sacrifice of his blessed Son—the certain truth that for our sakes "God spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all;" that, to "redeem us from all iniquity, Christ Jesus submitted unto death, even the death of the cross." And considering "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," shall we feel no sentiment of gratitude,

no incitement to thankfulness? When our God and Saviour have such claims upon our grateful love, shall we be slow to obey the sacred summons to enter his hallowed courts and there to worship Him in spirit and in truth! Or, is this a grievous commandment? Can we feel any repugnance or count it any unreasonableness to give up to God one day out of the seven? Can we cherish any disinclination to appropriate more exclusively to His service so trifling a proportion of our time? No: the generous sensibilities, the honest passions of mankind will rise in array against a sentiment so ungrateful, so degrading as this. They will awaken the feeling and the language of the Psalmist, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! Blessed are they that dwell in thy house—a day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

"It is," therefore, "good for us to be here." In this humble edifice which has been dedicated to the service of Jehovah, will God vouchsafe his presence; for Christ himself hath said that "where two or three are gathered together in his Name, there is he in the midst of them." Even here, as in his own appointed tabernacle, will he deign to be consulted; here he himself doth invite us to come "with a true heart and a full assurance of faith." Here will he have regard to the prayers of faith; and, through the agency of his blessed Spirit, will breathe to the contrite and sorrowful the comforting hope that their "sins are forgiven them."

Yet, it is *not* good for us to be here without a due regard to the motives and end of this assemblage; and with these how very inconsistent is any spirit of listlessness and idleness which may be brought to God's holy house! How contradictory to the meaning of this assembling ourselves together, not to join, with humility and earnestness, in the exercises of devotion—to manifest, in the hallowed temple of Almighty God, the look of indifference or to assume the

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attitude of ease—to stand or sit in vacant thoughtlessness when the solemn occasion claims the humblest posture and the most intense regard—to gaze about in slothful or audacious unconcern, when the eye should be lifted in meekness to God, and the soul engrossed by the wonders of redemption—to turn a heedless ear to the naked or expounded truths of God's word, when they declare the rewards of the righteous and point out the way to win them!

It becomes us, my Brethren, in entering the sanctuary of the Most High, to leave the world, its cares and its follies behind us; and not to suffer our spiritual contemplations to be sullied by an unworthy anxiety about temporal things. "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also," is the resolution which should animate the assembled worshippers of Almighty God; and let me add that the beautiful LITURGY of our Church affords, on these occasions, the means of fulfilling this excellent design—to unite the devotion of the heart and judgment in every prayer and praise.

And may God's grace and blessing ever be with us in the performance of the worship which is due to Him—that "entering his gates HERE with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise," we may HERE-AFTER be admitted to "the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven."

SERMON II.

ON FORMS OF PRAYER.

I. CORINTHIANS XIV. 15.

I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also.

It was believed by the ancient people of God not only that the Deity was immediately present in their places of public worship, but that multitudes of the angelic host invisibly joined with their mortal brethren in the common worship of their great Creator.* If, therefore, the assurance that "the host of the Lord doth encamp about us" here, naturally beget an earnest longing for the house which hath been consecrated to his service; it should equally invite us to a diligent regard of this solemn admonition, "keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God"—and induce a compliance with the injunction of the Son of Sirach, "Before thou prayest, prepare thyself."

In the presence of fellow-mortals whom we reverence—before our Sovereign and our Rulers we are careful of our deportment and our language. If we seek assistance or favor from them, we make known our wishes with humility and cautiously frame the words in which we clothe our entreaties. What, then, should be our conduct when we enter into the presence of Almighty God? what should be our language when we approach the Throne of Grace? how should we "who are but dust and ashes take upon us to speak unto the Lord?"

When even the spotless Cherubim of heaven veil their faces before the Lord of Glory, how shall

* King Agrippa, in dissuading the Jews from the war with the Romans, says, "I call to witness your sanctuary and the holy angels of God."—Joseph. War Book ii. c. 16. 4. Confer 1 Cor. xi. 10, and 1 Tim. v. 21.

wretched sinners address the same adorable Being? Will they presume to be heedless of their conduct and careless of their words in the presence of the King of kings? Will they breathe before His throne the unchastened dictates of the mind or speak, in his presence, the uncorrected effusions of the heart?—"God is in heaven and thou upon earth:" therefore, says the wise man, "be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God."

To provide against irreverent and ill-considered addresses to the Deity—to ensure the happy association of a devout with a decent behaviour in the worship of God—and to secure the means of "doing all things unto edifying" in the exercise of that solemn duty, our Church hath provided for herself a FORM of Devotion. Of the expediency of this the experience of every age assures us. For even in the pure days of primitive Christianity, St. Paul censures the Corinthians for an improper exercise of the gift of the Spirit in the offices of Prayer: and if *inspired* men sometimes perverted the gift of utterance to a confusion irreconcilable with the decency required in public worship and entirely destructive of edification; surely *uninspired* men, in the delivery of unpremeditated prayers, are more likely to fall under that condemnation of the Apostle.

Although it is certainly very possible that the utterance of the first awakened feelings of the heart, without the formality of preparation, may be accompanied with a warmer zeal in the speaker and beget a more lively interest in the hearer; yet there is as possible a danger that the one may rise into an unbecoming vehemence, or the other degenerate into an unfruitful curiosity. Besides, success in this manner of praying depends so much on the possession of a faculty which falls to the lot of few, that its general adoption must often be attended with much that is

extremely objectionable. For a ready elocution is not always an accompanying endowment of the man of sound mind, correct powers of reasoning and extensive erudition; nor does it always happen that he whose thoughts are conceived with rapidity and clearness can express them with a proportional quickness and propriety. In the case, therefore, of unpremeditated effusions of prayer, important omissions, unsuitable matter, unbecoming expressions and a disturbed connection will not be uncommon evils; while the signs of a labouring recollection and the embarrassed and tumultuous delivery which that will create, inimical as they must be to the edification of the devout and destructive of the due influence on the lukewarm, may confirm the irreligious in their propensity to scoff. These, too, are evils to a certain extent inseparable from the extemporaneous efforts of even the most highly gifted. We know that the mind and its powers, susceptible as they are of impressions from external things, are often impaired by languid health and depressed spirits. This influence will naturally be communicated to all the exercises of the mind; and thus the perfection of an extemporary prayer is rendered subservient to the commonest vicissitudes to which we are liable.

We are free, however, to admit that nothing done by man is without its imperfections and disadvantages, nor shall we deny that these appertain even to pre-composed forms of prayer in public worship; yet, if in the latter case they are less serious than where the prayers are unpremeditated, an advantage is gained strongly in favor of a Form. It has, for instance, been said of some that they "preached themselves and not Christ Jesus the Lord;" and the extempore manner of praying would afford occasion for the charge of a similar impropriety in the exercise of that office. In unpremeditated addresses to the Deity there is certainly not that check to the association of

private passions and interests with requests that should be public and general, which is supplied by a Form of prayer; and perhaps the bare possibility of the alliance of any selfish feeling or malevolent passion with these public petitions to Almighty God, is sufficient to justify the adoption of that effectual restraint. To this it may be added that a Form of prayer affords the simplest method of ensuring a "reasonable service" in the duties of public Worship—the most effectual means of rendering the warm impulses of the "spirit" subordinate to the correcting influence of the "understanding." Nor is it a light addition to this recommendation that, in a Form, the humblest and most unlearned petitioners at the throne of Grace are furnished with the "words of truth and soberness" in which to pay their vows and express their wants.

An objection, however, is alleged against Forms of Prayer, that a weariness is begotten by their perpetual repetition which leads to inattention and is subversive of devotion. But to this it may be briefly answered that the fault here is not in the *form*—especially if that form embraces "sound words and sound doctrine"—but in the *heart* which suffers such a languor to creep upon it; it is in the spirit which permits any feeling of listlessness to check the devotion which should reign within it. Nor is the objection generally applicable that we are thus affected by *hab.t.* Habit as often reconciles as renders us averse to the exercises in which we may engage; and it is no light recommendation of the practice of devotion generally that *habit* will render it agreeable. We know, too, that it reconciles us to many an usage in the common course of life where the charge of "vain repetitions" might be made with as much propriety and effect as in the case of Forms of prayer. We do not observe—to adduce a very familiar example—that the customary modes of salutation or the common forms of courteous address, often repeated and unvarying as

they are, affect the sincerity of friendly congratulation or the cordiality of affectionate wishes. Why, then, should the objection from habit apply with more force in the exercise of the offices of devotion? Or why should it not, in these also, serve to neutralize the baneful love of novelty and thus leave the spirit freely to co-operate with the understanding in the use of a Form of Prayer?

I shall only instance, further, the striking fact, that in the Bible itself the essential truths are but simple and few—that we never tire of repeating these—and that, so far from seeking novelties in the wide compass of that holy volume, the generality of Christians rather delight to repeat and apply those few texts which are in the mouths of all, even of “babes and sucklings,” and which embrace the most obvious sources of consolation and the plainest exhortations to duty. This is an argument very much strengthened by the like respect so uniformly paid to that beautiful Form of devotion well known by the name of the Lord’s Prayer.

It will, however, be asserted that whatsoever tends to animate devotion is to be recommended; and that the acknowledged “weakness of the flesh” should receive every lawful auxiliary to enable it to keep pace with the cheerful “willingness of the spirit.” Yet novelty were here an incompetent instrument—nay, an illegitimate means of forwarding the duties of devotion. It would subject them to the caprices and fluctuations of human passion, and add to the causes of the condemnation expressed in Scripture against those “itching ears” which disincline men to “endure sound doctrine.” Such a curiosity should certainly be disjoined from all alliance with devotion. It is erroneous in principle to bring into formal association a solemn duty to God and the gratification of a light and common passion. In our devotions, the necessities which prompt them, and the majesty and

loving-kindness of the Being to whom they are directed, should be all-powerful to stimulate and keep alive the spirit in which prayer should be made.

Finally, in allowing to extemporary prayer all the advantages it can claim, we must be permitted to say that every prayer thus uttered is a *form* to those who hear it—a form, too, which is attended with a peculiar disadvantage in being previously unknown to the audience. In this case, to adopt the language of a celebrated divine, “the listeners are confounded betwixt the attention to the Minister and their own devotion. The devotion of the hearer is necessarily suspended, until a petition be concluded; and before he can assent to it or properly adopt it, that is, before he can address the same request to God for himself, and from himself, his attention is called off to keep pace with what succeeds. Add to this, that the mind of the hearer is held in continual expectation, and detained from its proper business by the very novelty with which it is gratified. A congregation may be pleased and affected with the prayers and devotion of their Minister, without joining in them; in like manner as an audience oftentimes are with the representation of devotion upon the stage, who, nevertheless, come away without being conscious of having exercised any act of devotion themselves.”*

Let it not, however, be supposed that these remarks are designed as any reflection upon the usages of such Christians as adopt that method of conducting their public devotions; for we only notice the disadvantages which appertain to it in order to render more apparent what we humbly conceive to be the superiority of our own manner of addressing the Deity. And if every man must have some reason for the predilection which sways him—some cause for the preference he adopts; we, my Brethren, are fully justified in giving

* Paley's Moral Philos. Book v. ch. 5.

our reasons—in the spirit of meekness and Christian charity—for considering and adopting a FORM OF PRAYER in public worship as the most effectual means of fulfilling the Apostle's injunction, to "pray with the spirit and to pray with the understanding also."

But we have a higher authority for the use of Forms of Prayer than the mere dictates of expediency. The Scriptures of God sanctify the usage and furnish us with frequent examples of its adoption.

It was in a *Form of words* that Moses and the Israelites raised their thankful song to heaven for deliverance from the Egyptian host; and it is worthy of remark that this act of praise was performed by alternate voices. When Moses and his company had begun the hymn of thanksgiving, Miriam the prophetess and the women, with timbrels and dances, answered them and said, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."*

A deprecatory Form of Prayer was appointed to the elders and judges of Israel in whose neighbourhood a secret murder had been committed: "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it; be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people whom thou hast redeemed; and lay not innocent blood to thy people of Israel's charge."†

In a composed Form of words, the Priests of Israel were required to bless the congregation: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace."‡

On the occasion of a public Fast, the priests under the Law were commanded to use this Form of supplication: "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not

* Exodus xv. 1 & 20. † Deut. xxi. 7. 8. ‡ Numb. vi. 24. This beautiful form of benediction is inserted in our office for the Visitation of the Sick.

thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them.”*

In the Psalms of David, we are furnished with a whole book of Forms of devotion, suited to every occasion either of lively praise or humble supplication; and it is easy to perceive that many of those beautiful strains of devotion were composed expressly for public Worship.

The Jews we are assured, used Forms of prayer in their synagogue worship. Many of their Liturgies are extant;† and it is certain that the Lord's Prayer itself was partly borrowed from some of their formularies.‡ This circumstance, joined to our Saviour's constant custom of frequenting their Synagogues and temple, where forms of prayer were used, would plainly imply his approbation of that manner of praying. We are to infer from the request, “Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples,” that the venerable Baptist had prescribed to his followers a Form of prayer; and our Saviour's assent to their desire, in immediately furnishing them with the Lord's Prayer, besides his express injunction that they should “pray after this manner,” affords the strongest testimony to the expediency of Forms.

Thrice did our blessed Lord—and shall we presume to call it a “vain repetition”—in his agony in the garden, exclaim, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me;” and *thrice* he pronounced these words of resignation, “Not as I will but as thou wilt.” In his anguish on the cross, he cried out in the prepared language of the Psalmist, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;” and in this form of words, he yields his last breath, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

* Joel ii. 17.

† For an example, Vid. Prideaux's Connect. Vol. i. p. 446, and Horne's Introd. to the Scriptures, Vol. iii. p. 249, 5th Edition.

‡ Grotius in Matt. vi. 9.

In heaven above, we have the like hallowed testimony to Forms in praise. For this is the unchanging anthem of the Cherubim and Seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come:" the four and twenty elders respond the chaunt of praise in this unaltered form, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created;" and the countless quires of angels who surround the throne of Jehovah are never weary of repeating this same form of praise, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever."*

If, then, the holy men "of the old time before us" prayed to God in a stated form of words—if both Jews and Christians thus "lift up their voice *with one accord*" to the God and Father of all—if the Son of God himself prayed after that manner to his heavenly Father—if the worshippers in heaven have a Form of words in which they acknowledge the glory of the Everlasting; shall we not worship God after the manner of our fathers? shall not we confess the fitness of what the spirits of heaven sanction? shall we not practice what Christ himself hath approved and enjoined?

There are Forms of prayer extant which have been ascribed to St. Peter, St. James and St. Mark; and although there is no decisive evidence that these were actually the compositions of those Apostles, yet have we testimony sufficient to assure us that they are of very great antiquity. It is inferred, indeed, from the testimony of Cyril Bishop of Jerusalem, Cyprian and others, that the Liturgy ascribed to St. James was in use in the Church not long after the Apostolic age. In ancient Ecclesiastical History we frequently observe the names of the Roman, the Gal-

* Revel. iv. 8—11. v. 13, 14.

lican, the Alexandrian Liturgies, &c. ; and in many of the Fathers we meet with Forms of prayer adapted to occasions both of public and private worship. It needs, indeed, but little acquaintance with the early Christain writers to discover that such public and established prayers were nearly universal in the Church during the first fifteen centuries* ; and although many pernicious innovations attended the progress of the glorious Reformation in the 16th century, yet the celebrated CALVIN, however much he departed, in other respects, from the primitive usages of the Church, has left this testimony to the value of Forms of prayer ; "as for a form of prayers and ecclesiastical rites, I do highly approve that there should be a certain one from which it should not be lawful for the pastor in his office to depart."†

When, after a long protracted darkness, the brightness of truth broke in once more upon the benighted Church of Christ, OUR REFORMERS cleansed away the rubbish of Popish superstition and error as well from the Liturgy of the Church as from the essential doctrines of the Gospel ; and they framed the BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER which not only commands our approbation and reverence, but has "a good report even of them who are without."‡

The revision of the public services of the Church which led to the formation of our admirable Liturgy, commenced with the Reformation in the reign of Henry VIII.—and soon after the accession of his amiable and pious, but short-lived son, Commissionres, comprehending the most learned and excellent of the whole Clergy of the kingdom, were specially appoin-

* For citation of particular authorities, vid. Shepherd on the Common Prayer, almost *passim*. Several forms of prayer are given at length in the Apostol. Constit. ascribed to Clement of Rome. Lib. vii. viii. and vid. Cyril as cited by Mosheim, Eccles. Hist. Cent. iv. Part 2. Chap. iv. 3. † Letters to the Duke of Somerset.

‡ "Although a Protestant Dissenter," says Robert Hall of Leicester, in speaking of the Liturgy of the Church of England, "I cannot be insensible of its merits. I believe that the evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastised fervor of its devotions, and the majestic simplicity of its language have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions."

ted to complete that important work. These, which included in their number the well-known Reformers CRANMER and RIDLEY, being untainted with the spirit of innovation, contented themselves with purifying the Liturgy from the errors which had been introduced into it by the corrupt Church of Rome; carefully retaining those services which had been used in the first and purest ages, and only making such additions as the character of the times seemed to require. Not long after, the whole came again under the strict examination of nearly the same persons, aided by the celebrated LATIMER; and the result of their faithful labors was the production of that Liturgy which, with a few slight exceptions, we now possess. In the succeeding reign of the bigoted and cruel Mary, the promulgation and use of this excellent book was strictly forbidden, and many of its venerable compilers were called upon to seal their testimony with their blood. In the reign of Elizabeth, when the sanguinary proceedings against the Reformers were stopped, the Liturgy underwent another revision. During its progress, it was submitted to the examination of the Romish Clergy in the kingdom; but from the bitter severity of their criticisms it came forth triumphant and more deeply fixed than ever in the veneration and esteem of the nation. Soon after the accession of James I. it was tried in the crucible of the Puritans, and came a second time under their scrutiny in the reign of Charles II.; yet so faithful had been the labors of the primitive Reformers that the utmost hostility of those opponents, joined to the close and continued deliberation of the most eminent divines of the Church, produced nothing more than a few trifling alterations and inconsiderable additions. A revision was again made in the time of William III.; when, after some slight amendments, that Liturgy was finally established which we, at this day, use.*

* This short history of our Liturgy is chiefly extracted from the Introduction to Shepherd's Common prayer.

Such, my Brethren, hath been the origin and progress—and such have been the “fiery trials” of our inestimable Liturgy. Purified in the strifes of faction and surviving the convulsions of various revolutions—visited by the keenest resentment of Popish bigotry and subjected to the “railing accusations” of a rash fanaticism—it hath come down to us sealed with the blood of martyrs; recommended by the encomiums of passing ages, and recommending itself as well by the manifestation of human skill and judgment in its compilation, as by the higher “demonstration of the spirit and of power.”

While its best merit is its strict accommodation to the doctrines and even to the expressions of Scripture, it presents a strong claim to our admiration from the harmony and beauty of its general structure. It manifests the happiest combination of prayer with praise, and the most judicious intermixture of the word of God with both*—all “contrived,” to use the words of a celebrated writer, “to supply the mind with a succession of diversified engagements.”† By the responsions it provides, the congregation are never permitted to be uninterested spectators or unemployed worshippers, nor the Minister the sole organ of their devout communion with heaven; while in those tributes of praise and prayer which he offers up on their behalf, they are never without the means of preparation for a cordial response of the concluding Amen.

But the merits of our devotional offices will be best perceived and best appreciated by a more particular examination of them; but this must be postponed to another occasion. I shall here only add, in the words of St. Paul to Timothy, “consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things.”

* For an admirable retort upon the cavils against this commendable interchange, see Hooker's Eccles. Polity, Book v. Sect. 34. † Archd. Paley.

SERMON III.

ON THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

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MATTHEW VI. 9.

After this manner, therefore, pray ye.

It has been beautifully remarked that “the venerable compilers of our Liturgy have walked like skilful physicians in the garden of God; and finding it plentifully stored with medicines for the cure of spiritual diseases, they have collected a few of the most potent and useful.”* This judgment and skill is observable in the selection of those sentences from Holy Scripture with which our Common Prayer commences;—yet, before considering their tendency to prepare us for the devotional offices which succeed, it is right to bestow some commendatory notice on the custom of praying *in private* to God, upon our first entrance into Church. It is certainly proper to employ His assistance for a right performance of those duties in which we are about to engage; and in the following words of the Psalmist, we are furnished as well with an example of the devout practice, as with an appropriate form for such an invocation of the divine help: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be alway acceptable in thy sight, O Lord my strength and my Redeemer.”—These should be the sentiments of our souls and this the employment of our minds when we enter the house of God; rather than permitting any irreverent direction of either to wordly cares or wordly objects. Such a practice will prove a wholesome restraint upon the

* Shepherd Vol. i. p. 6.

wanderings of the mind, before we are called upon, by the voice of "Christ's ambassadors," more formally to prepare ourselves for the great duties of devotion.

In order to awaken the impressions and feelings which befit the supplicants at the throne of Grace, our attention is, in the first place, properly called to some of the most important truths contained in God's holy Word. One or more appropriate verses from Scripture are accordingly read by the Minister, before he proceeds to a particular exhortation to the duties for which we are assembled. To exemplify the wisdom which has directed the selection and combination of these portions of holy writ—as well as to furnish you with a hint for a salutary employment of the mind before the service begins, where there is leisure for such meditation—I shall request your attention to a short paraphrase of these **INTRODUCTORY SENTENCES.**

First, there is announced to us the gracious promise of salvation to him that "turneth away from his wickedness and doeth that which is lawful and right;" and to impress us with a lively sense of our iniquities, as well as to lead us to that happy resolution of amendment, we are exhorted, like the Psalmist, to "acknowledge our transgressions" and to have "our sin ever before us." Convinced of these offences and dreading the judgment of the Most High against them, we are admonished to implore our heavenly Father to "hide his face from our sins and to blot out all our iniquities;" and for our comfort under the dejection which a sense of sin must beget, we are reminded that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit—that a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise."—Yet to ensure the sincerity of this penitential sorrow and to condemn all dissimulation in this godly grief, we are commanded to "rend our heart and not our

garments and turn unto the Lord our God ;” for then, when our repentance is thus lively and earnest, we shall find Him “gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.” To God, indeed, “belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him—obeyed not his voice, nor walked in his laws which he set before us.” But to avert His just anger for this ungrateful rebellion, we are fitly called upon to say, “O Lord correct me”—for his chastenings conduce to our profit—“but with judgment ; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.” And lest we should presume too much upon that loving-kindness which is extended even to the rebellious transgressor of His laws, we are reminded of the perpetual obligation to “repent.” For, if *we* repent, *He* will pardon : if we “will arise and go unto our Father” with unfeigned sorrow for our sins, our Father will receive us, as the affectionate parent of the Prodigal received again his erring but repentant son. Yet to assure us once more of the hatefulness of sin in the sight of God, and to prevent our heedless relapse into the pollutions from which we have escaped, we are warned that, in “his sight shall no man living be justified”—and are urged to deprecate the severity of his justice by praying that he would “not enter into judgment with his servants.” Lastly, we are admonished against the arrogant and dangerous belief that “we have no sin :” a fatal error and gross untruth : instead of which we are required to “confess our sins,” and so, to prepare ourselves for the mercy of Him who “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

To these impressive Sentences from Scripture, succeeds the EXHORTATION—according to the practice of the early Christians who, as Cyprian informs us,* were prepared for prayer by an Introductory Exhorta-

* Viti. Shephard Vol. x. p. 8. note.

tion from the Minister. Its opening words, "Dearly beloved brethren," are in the affectionate tone of Apostolic address; and are calculated to renew the assurance that the Minister of Christ speaks to his followers "the truth in love." On this account, as well as for the solemnity and importance of the admonitions it contains, the congregation are required to *stand*, while the exhortation is pronouncing—an attitude, indeed, most consistent with a respectful attention. The Exhortation is, in substance, very similar to the selections from Scripture previously read, and is manifestly designed to maintain and further the impressions those were intended to produce. It urges, in a particular manner, the duty of confessing our sins, without any vain dissimulation of them in the presence of Him to whose "eyes all things are naked and open." And while it reminds us of the obligation to make these contrite acknowledgments "at all times;" it lays especial stress upon our duty "so to do, when we assemble and meet together" expressly for the worship of Almighty God. For there can be no sincere tribute of "thanks" to him, if our hearts be impenitent; no acceptable offering of "praise," if it "go out of feigned lips;" no cordial love of his "most holy word," if we continue in those sins which it condemns; no just expectation of what is " requisite and necessary for us," if we offer up, at the throne of Grace, "the sacrifice of the wicked."

For such reasons, before we proceed to these solemn acts of devotion, we are called upon to make a **GENERAL CONFESSION** of our sins; and to this the assembled worshippers of their heavenly Father are invited as well by the example as by the earnest entreaty of their Minister, who himself also assumes the posture of humility, and beseeches all to join him "with a pure heart and humble voice."

And how deep is the tone of self-abasement—how fervent the language of entreaty which is breathed

throughout that beautiful Prayer! We, prostrate sinners and children of the dust, presume, in the time of our distress, to call upon God as our "Father;" we address Him as "Almighty" to help: we entreat him as "most merciful" to forgive. We confess that "like lost sheep we have gone astray from the Lord our Shepherd"*—we have left his peaceful fold—we have forsaken his "green pastures." We have wandered away into the wilderness; into "a far country," and a "strange land," where all is desolation and wretchedness. We have slighted manifest duties; we have broken positive commands; "and there is no health in us."

Yet, a ray of light breaks in upon our darkness—a beam of hope shines through the tears of penitential sorrow. We plead the merits of him who "came to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn:" we turn our eyes, with consolation, to the cross; to which, with our Redeeming God, was "nailed the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us:" we look, with renovated hope, to him who "came to seek and to save that which was lost, and who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

In the office of Confession, we imitate the pious men of old. *They* were "ashamed and blushed to lift up their face unto God"—they "prayed unto the Lord and made their confession."† Such, too, was the custom of the primitive Christians, "who all came early in the morning to the house of prayer, and with sorrow and with affliction and with profusion of tears, made confession of their sins to God—*each man expressing his own repentance with his own mouth.*"‡

Nor do we neglect the manner, while we imitate the matter which the devout men of antiquity adopted in offering up these acknowledgements of unworthi-

* Psalm cxix 176, and xxiii. 1. † Ezra ix. 6. Daniel ix. 4. ‡ Basil, Epist. lxiii. vid. Shepherd Vol. 1. p. 25.

ness, and supplications for mercy. As the posture best suited to the humility expressed in those petitions, we are directed meekly to *kneel upon our knees*. Thus Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, "kneeled upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel." Daniel "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God." Our blessed Saviour, in his agony in the garden, "kneeled down and prayed" to his heavenly Father. Paul, after bidding the elders of Miletus farewell, "kneeled down and prayed with them all;" and the same Apostle, in these words, expresses prayer itself by the attitude in which it should be made, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

But why is so general a repugnance manifested by present Christian Congregations to assume this posture of humility, and to mingle their voices in this common supplication? What! can the conscious sinner neglect the earnest invitation to make his confession to Almighty God? Can the sorrowful and the contrite forbear to join in this lowly language of entreaty? Can *they* refuse to "kneel before the Lord their Maker?" Can they sit in mute indifference, when the mercy of Heaven is thus implored? O my brethren, if you feel your guilt—if you are sensible of your danger; you will not, you cannot refuse, in this posture and in this language which the Church prescribes and the Holy Scriptures recommend, to acknowledge your offences and to deprecate the wrath of your eternal Judge. "He," says the wisest of men, "that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

* 2 Chron. vi. 13. Daniel vi. 10. Luke xxii. 41. Acts xx. 36. Eph. iii. 14. It may here be remarked that where infirmity or other cause prevents from *kneeling*, *standing* is the posture most suitable for prayer. It will occur to all that none is more unbecoming than *sitting*. We certainly have instances in Scripture (Nehem. ix. 2. and Luke xviii. 13.) of persons praying standing; but we have no justification either from thence or from reason for the very irreverent and indolent posture of sitting while prayers are offered up.

Yes—God *will* “have mercy upon him, He will abundantly pardon”; and his Ministers are required to *proclaim* the joyful truth that He “willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” After a public confession of sin to Almighty God, the commissioned heralds of his will are rightly called upon to pronounce to the penitent and faithful, “the word of reconciliation which is committed unto them.”*

This proclamation of God’s pardon to those who confess and bewail their offences is called the **ABSOLUTION** or **REMISSION OF SINS**; and the authority employed by the Ministers of Christ in pronouncing it is derived from the commission given to them, as his Ambassadors, to “restore them which are overtaken in a fault—to comfort the feeble-minded—to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.”†

Yet against this form it is needless to disguise that objections have been made; and amongst others that it savors of Popery. To this however it is sufficient to reply that it was not only not extracted from any Popish service, but was even directly levelled against the Popish custom of granting absolution to individuals in private, and that positively—without reference to Him who alone can forgive sins. It will immediately be seen that the Absolution in our order of Prayer is simply a declaration—officially pronounced—of the terms of forgiveness, not *an actual and authoritative conveyance* of pardon.

The Scriptures inform us as well that God pardons and absolves all true penitents and sincere believers,

* “We are every one of us,” says Calvin, “ready to admit that after a general confession, to subjoin some signal promise which may excite hope of pardon and reconciliation, is a very useful and beneficial practice.”

† The form of the *Absolution* requires not a reference to the strong language in John, xx. 23.—*whosoever sins ye remit, &c* On this subject, vide. Apostol. Constit. Lib. viii. cap. 5, which, although we certainly do not entertain for that work the respect which its title would seem to claim, is nevertheless ancient enough to show what was the belief and practice of the Church at an early age.

as that the impenitent and unbelieving shall perish, and so the Minister of Christ is, by his office, expressly bound, in "declaring the *whole counsel* of God," to proclaim the one as well as the other—to declare the comfort of God's promises to the obedient, as well as the terror of his threatenings to the transgressor. Whenever, therefore, he fully and faithfully represents these truths, he is an instrument to "open mens eyes—to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, *that they may receive forgiveness of sins.*" That no encroachment is here made upon the peculiar prerogative of Him who "alone can forgive sins," is sufficiently evident from the words of the form of absolution itself, in which it is expressly declared that it is God which "pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." In this manner of expression, no occasion of presumption is permitted to the hardened, while all cause of despondency is removed from the penitent.

The absolution is concluded with an exhortation to those common duties which should follow, while they must precede a remission of sins—more especially a perseverance in that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto life," and unceasing prayer for that Holy Spirit which "helpeth our infirmities."

This address the Congregation are required to receive in attentive silence and in the same humble posture in which they had made confession of their sins—pronouncing, at its conclusion, the word AMEN. By this they express their entire concurrence in all that has been said by the Minister—a hearty desire of the pardon which "in Christ's stead," he proclaims to the penitent, and a cordial union in the concluding petition for heavenly grace.

The word Amen is very ancient in its origin, and we have early instances of its application as here di-

rected. The Congregation of the children of Israel were required to say *Amen** on the proclamation of the curses of God against notorious offenders: among the first Christians, the people "said Amen at the giving of thanks;"† and as an excitement to present worshippers to be diligent and earnest in the utterance of this word of assent to the several petitions in which they join, we may adduce the example of the early Christians who, as Jerome informs us, answered Amen in the Congregation with a voice so fervent that it resembled a peal of thunder.‡

After we have, by confession, approved ourselves the true disciples of Christ, we commence the office of a more particular supplication. Yet, before we venture to address our Heavenly Father in the words which man hath framed, we make a devout repetition of the LORD'S PRAYER: that Prayer which, in the primitive Church, was distinguished as the "daily, the appointed, the public, the common prayer" of Christians—that prayer which seems, even now, to be distinguished with a like respect from the followers of its blessed Author—that prayer which, for its simplicity and comprehensiveness, the Christian parent employs as the formulary in which his child's first addresses to God are made. "Since we have an advocate with the Father," says Cyprian, "we should, whenever we pray for pardon, allege unto God the very words which our Advocate hath taught us."|| And our own judicious Hooker observes that "should men speak with the tongues of Angels, yet words so pleasing to the ear of God as those which the Son of God himself hath composed, it were not possible for man to frame."§

The more we consider this beautiful Form of Prayer, the greater excellencies shall we discover in it.

* Deut. xxvii. 15. † 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

‡ Calmet's Dict. of the Bible in verbo. || Vid. Shepherd Vol. 1, p. 66.

§ Hooker's Eccles. Polity, Book v. Sect. 36.

We shall perceive the justness of the extraordinary recommendation that it not only "teaches us how to pray," but instructs us also "what manner of persons we should be;" and shall concur in the application to the Prayer of what had been said of the preaching of our Lord, "Never man spake like this man."

In this incomparable Form of devotion, we first invoke the Sovereign of the universe by the endearing name of Father. He condescends to assume towards us that tender relation, for our encouragement and hope—commanding not the homage of trembling subjects to a tyrannic Master, but inviting us as children to unveil our hearts before him; to lay open all our hopes and fears, all our desires and wants. And while our knowledge of this relation should remove from us all inordinate anxiety, it serves to soften the afflictive dispensations of his Providence—causes us to view them in the light of fatherly corrections—to discern, in every calamitous stroke, the chastening of a paternal hand and a demonstration of parental love.*

In the first petitions of this Prayer, what a check is imposed upon the selfishness of our nature! Our first thoughts are to be turned to God and his glory; and before our own individual wants are breathed, we are directed to pray for the universal reverence of *His* awful Name—for the unbounded extension of his kingdom—for an obedience to his will "on earth" free and perfect as that of the ministering spirits "in heaven."

And when we *are* permitted to make supplication for our personal wants, how powerful a restraint is placed upon every superfluous wish and extravagant desire! "Give us this day our daily bread," is the petition we are commanded to make—a petition characterized by the moderation and lowly-mindedness

* Vid. Pearson on the Creed Art. 1, part 3.

which form the spirit of the Gospel. Here, there is no encouragement to pray for the distinctions and enjoyments of the world—here, we are taught to ask no more than the needful sustenance of a day—we are admonished to have no over-anxious “thoughts for the morrow.” Our chief solicitude is to be directed to our many and great “trespasses,” for which we are instructed to implore the forgiveness of Almighty God against whom they have been committed. Here, too, we have a constant remembrancer of the duty of “forgiving one another,” by its solemn introduction as a condition of our own pardon—bringing forcibly to mind the argument of St. Paul that we should be “kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, *even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven us.*”

With a careful consideration of our *past* sins, there is also, in this comprehensive prayer, an instruction concerning *future* offences—to guard against them in time, by entreating the protection of our heavenly Father against the “temptations” which surround us, and a deliverance from the “sins which do so easily beset us.”

The concluding words of this admirable Prayer are an acknowledgment of the infinite Majesty of Him who is the “King of kings and the Lord of lords;” yet, as this appendix is contained in only one of the forms of this Prayer left us in the Gospels, we sometimes employ, and at other times omit it.

The Lord’s Prayer we very properly repeat in the humblest posture of devotion; and as a peculiar mark of respect to its heavenly Author, the congregation are directed, here and wheresoever else it occurs in the course of divine Service, to make an audible rehearsal of its several petitions, after the Minister. From the plural number running throughout this prayer, it is natural to infer that it was designed to be used *in com-*

mon; and so much respect had the early Churches for it, that they made it the commencement and employed it as the conclusion of their services. We begin with it, says Tertullian, because it is the foundation upon which all other prayers should be built; and we end with it, says Augustine, because it is the perfection of all prayer.* Formerly, indeed, our own Liturgy began with the Lord's Prayer,† and even now it is the first prayer, properly so called; but it was afterwards thought that a public confession of our sins ought properly to precede the repetition of this perfect Form, and it was subsequently inverted in this place, as the best possible conclusion to the penitential part of the Service.

One of the fathers informs us that the primitive Christians, after "Confession, rose from prayer and went on to Psalmody" ‡—yet, before we begin to glorify God by acts of praise, we make an humble entreaty for his aid and guidance. *O Lord, open thou our lips*; for a sense of guilt would keep them closed from the utterance of joyful sounds—and *our mouth shall shew forth thy praise*: thus aided we may hope to offer to thee acceptable thanksgiving. To God, indeed, from the magnitude of our transgressions, we are not worthy to present any sacrifice: we say, therefore, in the penitential strain of the Psalmist, *O God, make speed to save us*. And as "praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner," we continue the tone of contrition and say, *O Lord, make haste to help us*.

These **VERSICLES** are required to be said by the Minister and people *alternately*; for thus we fulfil the exhortation of the Apostle, "with *one mind* and with *one mouth*, to glorify God," and shew that we "*agree together* touching what we shall ask of the Father." It is a method, too, which, from the variety it affords, tends to enliven and invigorate devotion; and highly

* Vid. Mant's Prayer Book in loco.
Edward vi.

† At the first revision in the time of Basil, Epist. 63. Archbp. Secker, Sermons on the Liturgy.

to be recommended from its conformity with the usages of the Jewish worship as well as of the primitive Christians. We are informed by Ezra that the former "sang together *by course*, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord;"* and not only do allusions to the practice abound in the writings of the Fathers, but there is no ancient Liturgy extant, without these alternations of praise.†

Having thus qualified ourselves to say with David, "My heart is ready, my heart is ready, I will sing and give praise," we rise from the lowly posture of supplication and stand up rejoicing. In like manner, we are informed that when the "Priests and Levites praised the Lord, all Israel *stood*."‡ And this joyful tribute we begin by pronouncing, in unison, that summary of all praise, commonly called the GLORIA PATRI ||—comprehending an acknowledgment of the Eternal Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost: even, *as it was in the beginning* proclaimed by the "morning stars which sang together and the sons of God who shouted for joy"—*is now* acknowledged by the glad voices of the "congregation of saints"—and *ever shall be* celebrated by the "innumerable company of angels."

It may be proper to observe, as a sanction for our very frequent use of this Doxology, that the primitive Christians held it in the highest veneration, and even assigned its origin to the Apostles themselves.§ It possesses, also, a strong recommendation from its direct acknowledgment of the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity; embracing thus the prime articles of our Christian Faith—while we can scarcely pay too much respect to a composition which many of the primitive martyrs were fond of repeating at the stake, and ejaculating with their latest breath."¶

* Ezra iii. 11. † Comber's Companion to the Temple.

‡ 2 Chron. vii. 6.

|| From its initial words in Latin.

§ Basil de Spiritu

Sancti Shepherd Vol. i. p. 94

¶ This happened in the case of Polycarp, the contemporary and friend of St. John. Shep. Vol. i. p. 88.

And let us, my Brethren, in consistency with these sentiments—humbly hoping for forgiveness from our heavenly Father, for his Son's sake and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit—arise and ascribe to God the FATHER, who grants us his pardon ; to God the SON, through whom it was purchased and obtained ; and to God the HOLY GHOST, by whom it is sealed and dispensed, "Glory, and majesty, and dominion, and power, both now and ever. Amen."

D2

SERMON IV.

THE LITURGY CONTINUED TO THE
LITANY.

MATTHEW VI. 9.

After this manner, therefore, pray ye.

AFTER the general acknowledgment of praise to the Triune Godhead, expressed in the Gloria Patri—in which the Congregation are required to join with united voices, that our praises here below may resemble the worship of the blessed above, described by St. John as “the voice of many waters and of mighty thunderings”—we invite one another to more particular acts of thankfulness. To the Exhortation of the Minister, “Praise ye the Lord,” the people, sensible of their obligations to this duty, respond, with a cheerful concurrence, “The Lord’s Name be praised.”

And here, in imitation of the early Christian Church,* we commence with the Ninety fifth Psalm, commonly called, from its initial words in Latin, *VENITE EXULTEMUS*: a Psalm which strongly recommends itself to us by an invitation to most of our Christian duties, and especially those which appertain to public worship. Here, we have, in the first place, an exhortation to “sing unto the Lord”—a remembrancer of the general duty of praise; and as “God loveth the cheerful giver” of every tribute, we are invited “heartily to rejoice in the strength of our salvation.” An acknowledgment is then made of the power and majesty of Him who is “above all gods,” and whose “hand prepared the sea and the dry land;” and there follows an exhortation to a duty so becom-

* Dean Comber, vid. Mant’s Prayer Book in loco. and Shepherd vol 1. p. 108.

ing to his dependent creatures, that they "worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker." It concludes with a warning to those who "harden their hearts;"—furnishing an example of the punishment of such as "would not hear his voice," in their exclusion from his "rest"—even from that "peace of God which passeth all understanding" here, and from the "eternal weight of glory" which shall be the portion of the righteous hereafter.*

To this invitatory Hymn succeeds the PSALMS in their allotted portions, according to the day of the month—which are rehearsed *standing*, as an act of praise; and by the Minister and people *alternately*, in conformity with the manner in which their inspired authors designed them generally to be used †—in imitation of the practice of the early Christian Church ‡—and in obedience to Apostolic admonition to "*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.*"

Sweet, indeed, are the holy songs of Zion! How elevating the devout effusions of the "sweet Psalmist of Israel!" While the humblest of an humble family, the lowly shepherd of his father's flocks, he beguiled the hours of loneliness and leisure in tuning to his harp the praises of Jehovah. And when exalted to a higher charge; when anointed to the sceptre of Israel, the same occupation which had been the pastime of his youthful days, served now to soothe the cares of royalty and to "alleviate the disquietudes of state." Amid the pomp and splendor of royalty, God was not forgotten. Religion was still his theme:—

* It is directed in the Rubric that this Psalm be "said or sung"—which means that it shall be pronounced both by the "Minister and people." Vide. Mant in loco and citation from Collis. It denotes, however, more particularly that it may be either *chanted* or *read* by the Minister and congregation; and it would be a matter of congratulation were the former delightful method of reciting this and other elevating hymns more generally practised.

† This seems deducible from the name "Song of Degrees" applied to many of them, and the very structure of many. ‡ For abundant testimonies see Shepherd vol 1. pp. 123—126.

Jehovah was the burden of his animated song. The praises of Him which had once resounded from his lips amid the solitudes of the desert, echoed now from his harp throughout his halls and palaces. With these he quickened the joys of devotion and solaced the depression of grief—in these hallowed effusions he hath left, for the edification of the devout, the lights and shadows of a holy life—and in them the true Christian finds a refreshment for the soul, “grateful as the manna which descended from above and conformed itself to every palate.”

“In the language of this divine book,” says a celebrated prelate, “the prayers of the Church have been offered up at the throne of grace from age to age. And it appears to have been the manual of the Son of God in the days of his flesh; who, at the conclusion of his supper, is generally supposed and on good grounds, to have sung a hymn taken from it; who pronounced upon the cross the beginning of the 22nd. Psalm, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!’ and expired with a part of the 31st. in his mouth, ‘Into thy hands I commit my spirit.’”

And can it possess a stronger recommendation than this to the *followers* of the blessed Jesus? Can there be a more powerful motive for its adoption into their sacred services—to be a “morning and evening sacrifice” of the worshippers of God? Unlike the fairest productions of human wit which, after a few perusals, like gathered flowers, wither in our hands and lose their fragrance; these unfading plants of Paradise become, as we are accustomed to them, still more and more beautiful; their bloom appears to be daily heightened, fresh odours are emitted and new sweets are extracted from them. He who hath once tasted their excellencies will desire to taste them again, and he who tastes them oftenest will relish them best.”*

* This and the above quotations are from Bishop Horne, *Introd. to Comment on the Psalms*, p. 59.

The Doxology or Gloria Patri already noticed, is used at the conclusion of every Psalm, as being particularly applicable to compositions which have for their leading object the glory of God. By being annexed to the end of every Psalm, it interposes a useful mark of division betwixt such as are read in succession; for generally the Psalms have no immediate connection, but proceed, without regard to their numerical order, to topics of devotion quite distinct. The use of the Doxology as an appendix to each Psalm was also very common amongst the ancient Churches.*

Having now endeavoured to "set forth God's most worthy praise," we proceed to another part of the duty of public Worship, specified in the Exhortation,— "to hear his most holy WORD." As it is right to employ our feelings and faculties in glorifying our Maker; so, after our *affections* have been particularly engaged in the preceding offices of praise, we now assign the leading part to the *understanding*, in giving our diligent attention to the "oracles of God." This transition from prayer and praise to hearing of the word, serves to afford that recreative variety to the mind by which it is enlivened and strengthened as well as the body; or, as it has been well observed, "he which prayeth in due sort is made more ready to hear; and he which heareth, the more earnest to pray." †

The custom of reading the Holy Scriptures in public derives strong authority from the examples as well of the Jews as of the early Christians.‡ And it is right to make these appeals to the "Law and the testimony"—in this manner, to "add line unto line and precept upon precept;" for "in them we think we have eternal life." There the righteous are encouraged and the wicked are admonished—the devout

* "in clausulâ Psalmi omnes concinunt Gloria Patri &c." Io. Cassian, A. D. 424. vid. Shepherd vol. i. p. 130. Note. † Hooker. ‡ Nehem. viii. 1—8. Acts xiii, 15 xv. 21. Coloss. iv 16.

confirmed and the lukewarm awakened. There the broken-hearted penitent hears the blessed words of consolation—the afflicted believer the comforting language of grace. They are an unerring guide through the devious mazes of this mortal journey; and conducting us triumphant “through the dark valley of the shadow of death,” they “open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.”

In them, too, we have “more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or country they may have been written.”* In the historical parts of the Bible, we have the recorded examples of “clouds of witnesses” for our “patience and comfort in the race that is set before us”—we are furnished, in the poetical books, with the best auxiliaries to every devotional office—in the prophecies we have a most instructive “testimony of Jesus”—and we possess, in all, “a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths” in every walk of life.

It is wisely provided by our Church that both the Old and New Testament should be read in public; for they are, as St. Chrysostom† expresses it, “two handmaids and sisters attendant on one Lord;” or, as our Church herself asserts, “both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ‡”—while the Scriptures themselves declare the Law to have “a shadow of good things to come,” and the Gospel “the very image of the things ”

The custom of our Church in selecting particular lessons for particular occasions, as well as in appointing the Scriptures generally to be read in course, is elucidated and recommended by this testimony of Augustine: “you may remember that I have lately been treating of the Gospel according to *St. John*, as

* Sir William Jones.

† Vid. Shepherd, Vol. 1, p. 139.

‡ Article vii.

appointed to be read in the order of the lessons. But, at present, because solemn holidays intervene, for which *proper lessons are appointed*, I am under the necessity of interrupting the course I had begun.”*

As “the Law is our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,” the Old Testament is properly appointed to be read first:—after a lesson from which succeeds the Hymn commonly called the TE DEUM.† This is in conformity with a decree of the Council of Laodicea nearly 1500 years ago,‡ that the public reading of God’s word should be mixed with repeating his praises;—a combination as refreshing as it is natural and proper. It has been beautifully remarked by one of the Fathers,|| that after the angel of the Lord had first published the glad tidings of salvation, immediately a multitude of the heavenly host commenced an anthem to the Deity:§ so we also, after the promulgation of the joyful truths contained in God’s Word, should rise up and unite our voices in praise to Him who hath graciously “caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning”—for our “patience, comfort and hope.” Nor has it been less happily observed that if we bless God for our daily food of meat and drink, we should much more glorify him for the food of our souls contained in his Holy Word.¶

The Te Deum was certainly composed as early as the sixth century; and besides its claim to respect from its antiquity, it recommends itself as well worthy of the “spouse of Christ,” by the sublimity of its expressions and the devout fervor of its sentiments; by the strict accommodation of its language to the words of Scripture,** and not least by its positive assertion of the leading articles of our Faith. Here we imitate the “Angels, the Cherubim and Ser-

* A. D. 395. Sheph. Vol. 1, p. 165.

† From its initial words in Latin.

‡ A. D. 367.

|| Ambrose, Dean Comber as cited in Mant

§ Luke ii. 13.

¶ Dean Comber.

** See marginal references to the Te Deum in Mant’s Prayer Book.

aphim and all the powers of Heaven," and join with the beatified spirits of the "Apostles, Prophets and Martyrs" in ascribing praise to "the *Father Everlasting*," to "*Christ the King of Glory*," and to the "*Holy Ghost the Comforter*." We make, too, especial acknowledgment of the redemption effected by him who "took upon him to deliver man"—of his condescension in assuming our nature, and his inestimable love, in submitting for our sakes, to "the sharpness of death." And then, confessing his exaltation at the right hand of God, and professing our belief that he "will come again to be our Judge," we conclude with an earnest prayer for his aid and guidance, that in the "great and terrible day of the Lord," we may not be "confounded" by a condemnation to that "outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

There is another Hymn appointed to be substituted for the Te Deum, at the discretion of the Minister—which although certainly inferior to the latter composition and, on that account, seldom used, is nevertheless deserving of attention and respect. It is extracted from the "*Song of the three Holy Children*" in the Apocrypha*—was used in the Jewish Church and adopted, at a very early age, into the Christian. It contains a sublime appeal to all created things—animate and inanimate—visible and invisible—to acknowledge and adore the Majesty of the Eternal God; and would be fitly employed on those occasions when the first lesson treats, in a particular manner, of the creation and the wonderful works of the Most High. Amongst these we may notice Trinity Sunday, when the first Chapter of Genesis is read; and on the day for which that Chapter of Daniel is appointed† which records the martyrdom and deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, it would be introduced with

* Verse 35. † 19th Sunday after Trinity

singular propriety—inasmuch as its composition was primarily ascribed to those illustrious confessors, and their Hebrew names* are introduced at the conclusion of the Hymn itself.

To the second lesson, which is uniformly selected from the New Testament, and to the succeeding songs of praise the same remarks will generally apply which have been already made. It will be sufficient to observe that we should give peculiar reverence and attention to that volume which “has God for its author and salvation for its end;”† and that, as soon as this invaluable book is closed, we should commence a Hymn of thankfulness to Him who hath “brought life and immortality to light *through the Gospel.*” In fulfillment of this “reasonable service,” we commonly employ the HUNDREDTH PSALM, as containing an earnest appeal to “all lands” to “be joyful in the Lord and to serve him with gladness”—so to praise him in his courts here below, that we may forever “dwell in his tabernacle and rest on his holy hill” above.

The Hundredth Psalm although used, almost without exception, after the second lesson, is nevertheless preceded by the Song of Zacharias,‡ which may be substituted for it at discretion—and we cannot but admit that the latter is more particularly suited to this place, as having so express a reference to the “redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Nor can we forbear the expression of our surprise that custom should have almost entirely excluded this Hymn from use in its appointed place—speaking, as it does, the words of inspiration, and announcing, in a strain so elevated and impressive, the arrival of “the day-spring from on high.” We should rejoice, at least, to witness its general adoption on the festival of the Nativity of

* Daniel i. 7. † Locke. Luke i. 68.

Christ; for it would then, with a remarkable propriety, succeed the account of the birth of our blessed Lord.

In such a manner, it is appointed by our Church that we "receive the engrafted word:" with "meekness," which is exemplified in the sitting and listening posture we are then directed to assume; and with "gladness," which is manifested in the hymns which immediately succeed each Lesson. And here, while we obey their own sacred injunction, we are fulfilling a "reasonable" duty; for it becomes conscious sinners to humble themselves when the divine threatenings against sin are rehearsing, and not less to be joyful when they hear promulgated the glad-tidings of salvation.

After the reading of the Word of God, there seems a tacit appeal to us like this, "Believest thou the Scriptures?"—and to that we are directed to make the proper reply, "Lord I believe," in the repetition of the APOSTLES CREED which immediately follows. The propriety of its introduction in this particular place is further evinced by the argument of the Apostle that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the *Word of God*;" nor is its use less strongly sanctioned by the injunction of Scripture, that we should "confess with our mouth" the doctrines which we believe in our heart."

Although it cannot be proved that this Creed was, in so many words, the composition of the Apostles; yet from the testimony of writers* who lived near to the Apostolic age, we are to infer that much of it was derived from their times. It is, however, from the *doctrine* rather than from the *name* of the Apostles, that the appellation of this Creed is derived; for all its articles "may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture."†

* Especially Ignatius who flourished A.D. 107. vid. Ep. Tomline on Art. viii. Ch. of England, where the Confessions of Faith of some of the early Fathers may be seen. † Art. viii.

To manifest our readiness to "contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints," we *stand* during the rehearsal of the Creed; and to the requisition of our Lord from all those who sought his help, "Believe and it shall be done unto thee," we declare our respect by *repeating aloud*, each one on his own behalf, the various articles in this compendium of our Faith. It is also usual to *bow at the name of Jesus*, where it occurs in the Creed; or as our Church expresses it, "when, in the time of divine service, the Lord Jesus shall be mentioned, due and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present, as it has been accustomed."* This custom, although it has no direct authority from Scripture, is nevertheless strongly sanctioned by the expression of St. Paul that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow;" and judiciously retained as indicative of our reverence for that "Name" which is not only "above every name," but the "only one given among men whereby we may be saved."

With the "full assurance of faith" professed in the Apostles' Creed, we now "draw near to God with our petitions for *those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul.*" By professing our belief that "God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," we have prepared ourselves for the invocation of heavenly blessings; for "we cannot call on him in whom we have not believed." Yet, before proceeding with these petitions for our temporal and spiritual wants, the Minister and people mutually recommend each other to God's blessing and favor. As Boaz said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you;" and they replied, "The Lord bless thee"—so here, the Minister exclaims, "The Lord be with you;" to which, with corresponding benevolence, the people answer, "And with thy spirit."

* Vid. Canon xviii. Ch. of England.

This is a form of salutation which succeeds with much propriety, to a solemn and public profession of faith, intimating a brotherhood in Christ; for St John forbids us to say to a *heretic*, "God speed"—and amongst the primitive Christians, the faithful were not allowed to salute those which were excommunicated. These short, but extremely impressive sentences were very anciently introduced into the public services of the Church; for we find a general Council in the 6th century ratifying the usage as an Apostolical institution.* The salutation of the Priest serves also to remind the people that unless "the Lord be with them," their services cannot be perfectly performed; and the responsive prayer of the congregation is no less proper in behalf of him who is the organ of their petitions to heaven.

The Exhortation, LET US PRAY, which follows, and which was often repeated in the ancient Liturgies as in our own,† may be considered an exhortation to clothe the spirit with the humility—a summons to bend the body to the lowly attitude, which befits the suppliants at the throne of Grace. But, because we are *unworthy* to ask any blessing, we first commit ourselves to the indulgent favor of the Godhead, by reiterating the plaintive cry of the unclean, the afflicted and the needy, "Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us." And knowing "our *ignorance* in asking," we begin our petitions to God by repeating that most prevailing form of Prayer which Christ himself hath taught us. "As after Confession," observes an eminent prelate, "we used it to obtain confirmation of our pardon, so now we prefix it to our requests as a summary of our desires."‡

From the recital of the Lord's prayer, we proceed to express the several heads of those supplications

* Concil. Bracarense, A. D. 536. Vid. Archbp. Secker, Sermons on the Liturgy

† In the ancient Liturgies, a Deacon was directed frequently to call upon the people to "pray, to pray earnestly, to pray yet more earnestly." Vid. Sheph. Vol. i. p. 253.

‡ Archbp. Secker.

which we are about to offer up, in certain short interlocutory petitions betwixt the Priest and the Congregation. These are, for the most part, extracted from the Psalms ; and they serve to assist our preparation for a more earnest and devout union in the Collects and Prayers which succeed.

The COLLECTS are so named, because those appointed for the day are *collected* from the substance of the Epistles and Gospels to which they are prefixed ; or because they are a brief and comprehensive *collection* or summary of spiritual and temporal wants.* They are most of them more than 1200 years old, having been, in a great measure, taken from the Sacramentary of Gregory the Great which was composed before the seventh century ; and such as have been extracted from compositions of a more recent date have undergone the strictest revision.† Besides the sanction of antiquity, they have an indirect recommendation from our Lord himself ; who in his incomparable prayer, hath left us what may be strictly termed a Collect. After that model, indeed, our Collects seem to have been very closely framed ; while his own enjoined addition is never omitted in them, to “ask *in his name*.”

These short petitions possess many advantages over one long-continued and unbroken prayer. We are, by this means, constantly reminded of the Attributes of the Deity ; with an acknowledgment of which those prayers uniformly commence :—by the frequent recurrence of the word *Amen*, the note of the congregation’s assent to every supplication, the attention is kept fixed and the devout feelings are not permitted to languish ; while, by the expression

* Others affirm, perhaps with greater propriety, that the *Collect* was so called from being publicly repeated in the *stations* or religious assemblies of the Church : which meeting was called *Collecta*, and the act of meeting *colligere dies collecta*.

† Vid. Shepherd Inrod, to Com. Prayer, p. 31.

"through Jesus Christ our Lord," or words very similar, which are the common conclusion of the Collects, we are taught the necessary truth that our most earnest petitions and devout praises need to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ and perfumed with the incense of his sacrifice, before they can be acceptable to God.

A particular Collect is appointed for every Sunday in the year; accommodated to those parts of the mighty plan of redemption which we successively commemorate—besides special ones for the several Festivals and Fasts observed by the Church. To the Collect for the day succeed those for PEACE and GRACE: to both of which the name of Collect is exceedingly appropriate from their close correspondence with the language and tenor of the Scriptures from which they are extracted; and both of which are judiciously affixed to the devotional services of *every day*, as embracing subjects which should be prominent in every day's supplications.

"*Peace* I leave with you; my peace I give unto you," was amongst the latest bequests of our Redeemer. "He prayed for it, paid for it, wept for it, bled for it;* and so it behoves us to pray as well as strive, "if it be possible to live peaceably with all men;" and more especially, by a "conscience void of offence," to obtain that "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

And as without "*Grace* to help," we shall fail to "lead a quiet and peaceable life:" as "the world cannot give" the tranquility of an untroubled conscience, we rightly pray for God's "governance in all our doings." That alone can prove to us a perfect protection from the besetting sins of life, and a sufficient defence from the power of every adversary.

* Bp. Sparrow.

To these beautiful Collects succeed the Prayers for the KING, the ROYAL FAMILY, the CLERGY AND PEOPLE, and for ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN ; yet as they are all substantially contained in the Litany which, on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, is appointed to be used in their stead, an examination of the latter will render any particular consideration of them unnecessary. The same remark will apply, generally, to the *Prayers on particular occasions*—invoking particular blessings and deprecating particular calamities—which are annexed to the common Order of the Morning and Evening Prayer.

With regard to the EVENING PRAYER. I beg to add that the remarks and explanations already given will so generally apply to it, that a particular illustration of that part of our public service would be superfluous. In this, indeed, the only distinction observable from the order of the Morning Prayer is in the Hymns which succeed each Lesson, and in the two Collects which follow that which is appointed for the day.—Nor is it necessary to make any particular remark upon these ;—for the Hymns, as in the Morning Service, are selected on account of their lively expression of gratitude and joy for the good-tidings announced in Scripture ; and the Collects are different, only in words, from those employed in the former part of the day. As we, then, implored the divine protection and guidance through the day we had commenced ; so now we entreat the same holy guardianship against the “perils and dangers” of the approaching night.

And do Thou “Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves ; keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls ; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

* Collect for second Sunday in Lent.

SERMON V.

ON THE LITANY; AND ON PSALMODY.

MATTHEW VI. 9.

After this manner, therefore, pray ye.

IN fulfilling the exhortation of St. Paul that “supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men,” it is not, my Brethren, too much to say that there is no human form we can employ which recommends itself so strongly as the beautiful Litany of our Church. To develope—to do any justice to the excellencies of this composition would, indeed, require more time than I can give, and more ability than I can pretend to. You will, therefore, excuse a brief and imperfect essay.

The word LITANY is of Greek origin, and in the acceptation of the best writers in that language, denotes an earnest supplication to the Deity in times of adverse fortune;* while in the Christian Church, it is used, in a similar sense, as a “supplication and common intercession to God when his wrath lies upon us.” In such a manner have the “supplications” enjoined by St. Paul† been generally interpreted; and we are assured that succeeding Christians—as early at least as the third century—used the forms of earnest and alternate prayers called Litanies. This method, indeed, of praying by interchange—in short requests and suitable responses—St. Chrysostom ascribes to the primitive times; and Tertullian informs us that the same was practised in his days.‡ In sub-

* The classic reader would be struck with the sentiment in Æschylus’ *Persæ*, line 496. † 1 Tim. ii. 1. ‡ A D. 200. Dean Comber as quoted in Mant in loco.

sequent times, many Litanies were composed; and the celebrated Gregory, in the sixth century, formed out of all those extant that justly famed Litany which has commanded the regard of after ages, and has been, in a great measure, the foundation of that of our own Church.

It was said by a celebrated divine that "the enumeration of human wants and sufferings in the Litany is nearly complete. A Christian petitioner can have few things to ask of God or deprecate which he will not find there expressed, and for the most part with inimitable tenderness and simplicity;"* and what the judicious Hooker said of a higher composition will apply with much truth to the Litany: "let there be any grief or disease incident unto the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy to be found."

Here, lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, we begin with the cry for mercy—addressed to the Eternal Three, the "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts."† To God the FATHER we make our fervent supplication, because "we have sinned against him." To God the SON we repeat the prayer for mercy, because we have "neglected the great salvation" he hath purchased for us; and to God the HOLY GHOST, we cry aloud, as conscious of having "grieved the Holy Spirit of God."

In the tone of distress and in the language of fervent supplication, we implore Him "to whom all power is given in heaven and earth" to be "merciful to our unrighteousness, and our sins and iniquities to remember no more"—to *spare* us whom his precious blood was shed to redeem, that his "wrath wax not

* Archd. Paley

† "That the Seraphim did really celebrate all the *Three Persons* of the Godhead upon this occasion (Revel. iv. 8.) is no conjecture; but a point capable of the clearest demonstration." Jones on the Trinity, ch. iii. No. 19.

hot against us and consume us." To this cry of the afflicted for help—of the criminal for mercy, all respond the earnest appeal, "Spare us good Lord."

"We pray, then—and pray unitedly—for the removal of all evil from us; for deliverance from the errors, follies and wickednesses into which we are so prone to rush; from the temporal judgments which sometimes fearfully overtake us; from the dread and complicated horrors of war; and from the "sudden" coming of that awful visitant which calls us to the bar of God—that we may have time to "set our house in order before we die," and that the departing spirit may be fitted, by more complete preparation, to meet the Judge of all the earth. We pray, too, against all interruptions of social peace and quiet—against every machination which would impede the welfare and shake the stability of governments—and against the depraved spirit of such as, in the hardness of an impenitent heart, "despise the statutes" of the Lord, and "have no fear of God before their eyes."

And all these evils we deprecate by pleading—not our own worthiness, but the merits of the "Lord our Righteousness"—recapitulating all the acts of his condescension for us men and for our salvation; and renewing thus the intercession of the Prophet: "*according to all thy righteousness*, let thine anger be turned away: defer not *for thine own sake*, O my God."

This mercy, too, we beg *in all time of our tribulation*; lest overcome by poverty and distress, we "faint when we are rebuked of the Lord"—*in all time of our wealth*, lest "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke his holy word"—*in the dread hour of death*, when the soul is summoned to its final recompense; and we pray especially, that we may "find mercy of the Lord" in the dreadful day of judgment.

From this representation of our own necessities, we proceed to intercessions for others—prefaced, however, by the confession that we are “sinners” who thus “take upon us to speak unto the Lord”—and praying that He would not be “extreme to mark what is done amiss,” but HEAR us whom he hath graciously encouraged to ask by the promise that “it shall be given unto us.”

And first, we offer up our prayers for the *Church Universal*; that by maintaining sound doctrine and preserving her *Union*—“in the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life,” she may be presented a “chaste Virgin to Christ” at that joyous hour when the glad voices of the spirits of heaven proclaim that “the marriage of the Lamb is come.” Then, according to the injunction of the Apostle that we make “supplication for Kings and all that are in authority,” so we pray for *our most gracious King and Governor*—that God’s blessing may attend him in all that he undertakes for His glory and the welfare of his subjects. This is a prayer recommended also by the practice of the early Christians; and if *they* prayed for the civil rulers at a time when they were enemies of the faith and persecutors of its professors—shall not *we* make earnest intercession for the monarch whom we love, and pray fervently for our Jerusalem, that “peace be within her walls and prosperity within her palaces?” Shall we not strive to uphold the commendation that “loyalty to her King is the boast and glory of the Church of England; and that the spirit of patriotism breathing in her devotional offices has ever been displayed in the lives of her sons?”*

Nor should a Christian people ever forget, in their prayers, them who “watch for their souls”—the “overseers of the Church, and the ambassadors for

* Shepherd vol. I. p. 275.

Christ"—but make entreaty that they may "take heed to themselves and the doctrine;" and that, while they "*preach* the word boldly as they ought to speak," they may also be an "*example* of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

Avoiding the reproach of those who are "not afraid to speak evil of dignities," we pray for heavenly direction and favor to all that are *in authority under the King*, that they may prove to us "the ministers of God for good." Afterwards, we make intercession for all sorts and conditions of men, that animated by "one heart and one soul," they may "serve God with reverence and godly fear;" that they may be "doers of the Word and not hearers only," bringing forth "fruit unto holiness." We offer up an earnest prayer for "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," that they may become, with the true believers, "one fold under one shepherd:"—we employ the divine presence and protection for those who are "established in the faith"—for his pity and succour to them that "fall and are bowed down"—and that we may all participate in the triumph of Him who hath "spoiled principalities and powers, and destroyed him that had the power of death."

We pray also for all wants and necessities of a temporal character:—making supplication for the sorrowful and broken hearted—entreating Him to be "a father of the fatherless and a judge of the widow"—to guard those who are exposed to perils by land, and preserve them that "go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters"—to pity and relieve the bodily sufferer, the sick, the helpless, the prisoner and the captive.

Lastly we pray, as our Lord instructed us, for them "who despitefully use us and persecute us;" imitating himself "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again," but prayed on the cross for his persecutors and

murderers. Entreating for all, the blessings of "seed-time and harvest, of rain from Heaven and fruitful seasons;" we conclude with imploring the divine forgiveness for all our sins and imperfections, and with seeking that help from above through which we may be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

To these petitions succeed a sudden, earnest, pathetic appeal to the SON OF GOD—even to Him who "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities"—to the LAMB OF GOD, which was sacrificed for us—to CHRIST our Intercessor at the right hand of the Father. To the "Lord and his Christ," we reiterate the prayers for mercy: *thrice* we repeat, in the earnestness of distress, the supplication of perishing sinners. It is the cry of the afflicted—the prayer of the needy—the plaint of the dying.

And because every office which man performs is imperfect—that we may rectify what is amiss and supply what is wanting in our preceding supplications, we repeat the prayer of our blessed Lord. To its comprehensive petitions we annex an acknowledgment of our sins and iniquities, and beseech him not to "deal with us" after the one nor to "reward us" according to the other.

Again, lest our devotion may have decayed, or our thoughts wandered, or our hearts grown cold, we are called upon to PRAY—more earnestly to pray—to "pray without ceasing," for the mercy and assistance of our heavenly Father. Assured that He "despises not the sighing of a contrite heart," we readily lay before him all our troubles and confess all our sorrows: we freely call upon him to "arise, help and deliver us"—encouraged as we are, to the petition by what our fathers before us have told of the wonderful works that he hath done.*

* Psalm 44. i.

And now, showing that we "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," we confess again the glory of the Triune Godhead; and "cry aloud and spare not" in mutual and fervent ejaculations to Him who "laid down his life for us all." Then, the exhortation **LET US PRAY** is once more repeated; for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by storm:" again we pray, lest through "our infirmities," we may have neglected to deprecate any of "those evils which we most righteously have deserved." With this conviction, we make entreaty that, under the most grievous afflictions, we may "put our whole trust and confidence in His mercy"—in this reiterating the sentiment of Job, "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"—and resolving thus with a more illustrious exemplar, "Not my will, but thine, O God, be done."

Before proceeding to the concluding prayers of the Litany, we pronounce the beautiful form of the **GENERAL THANKSGIVING**—comprehending an acknowledgment to the gracious Bestower of "every good and every perfect gift," for all the temporal blessings we are permitted to enjoy; and especially for that surpassing love in which originated "the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ." But that our thankfulness may not rest in mere acknowledgment—that we may not "draw nigh unto God with our *lips* alone," we conclude with an invocation of heavenly help, so to quicken in our *hearts* the sense of God's mercies, that our lives and daily walk may manifest that devotedness to his service enjoined in the command to "love him with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength."

After this, follows the ancient and excellent **PRAYER OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM**; selected from a Greek Liturgy commonly ascribed to that zealous and highly-gifted Father. It is a Prayer peculiarly well suited to its

place, the conclusion of the Litany, as well as of the common Order of the Morning and Evening Service; for it comprehends a summary of all we have previously asked. It expresses a hearty desire that our united supplications would be graciously received by Him "that heareth prayer," and contains a repetition of the plea furnished by the gracious promise of Christ—"Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them."

Having now summed up all our wants, we conclude with that brief form of affectionate intercession which St. Paul hath left us—a recommendation of ourselves to Him "which is, which was, and which is to come:" to JESUS CHRIST, by whom came "grace and truth"—to the "love of God," who "so loved us that he gave his only begotten Son to the end that we might not perish, but have everlasting life"—and to the HOLY GHOST, through whose fellowship and communion, "we are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Thus ends the LITANY—of which it has been justly observed * that as in the Liturgy in general we may be said to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," so in the Litany we worship Him in the perfection of beauty. After this incomparable Form of supplication, we change the tone of contrition into the words of rejoicing:—for the "voice of them that weep" we substitute the language of thanksgiving, and "come before the presence of God with a SONG."

The SINGING OF PSALMS is an exercise of devotion which has been approved by the practice of every age of the Church, of the Jewish as well as the Christian; and therefore it claims our particular attention. The custom of our Church directs that a Psalm be sung after the Litany; and certainly it is a very suitable exercise betwixt portions of the Service so distinct as that and the Office of the Holy Communion.

* Dr. Bisse.

Although we cannot give credit to all the wonders related of the gifted bards of antiquity, nor admit the preternatural influence which some have ascribed to music; yet we know that the origin of the art is very ancient, and that the relish for its charms is almost universal amongst men. There seems, indeed, to be something in the human mind congenial to the spirit of song; some chord in the human heart which the voice of melody wakes to spontaneous action. It seems to be a predilection inherent and powerful as the approbation of a general harmony throughout the operations of nature: it has grafted itself with an extraordinary tenacity upon the mind—it seems united, in inseparable conjunction, with many of the best impulses of the heart. Even in the hallowed offices of religion it has pleaded, as it were, a native claim to association;—and in every age that claim has been allowed. The gods of the heathen were honored with hymns of praise: and the Name of the only true Jehovah hath ever been magnified with the voice of melody.

In the holy records of our faith—in the BIBLE—we observe the chastened spirit of song pervading many of its sacred pages. The Psalms of David are an uninterrupted series of poetical compositions; and the Prophets, besides the rhythmical construction of their sentences, abound with those sublime sentiments and strong figurative expressions which constitute the soul of poetry. In the Book of Job we find the plaint of wretchedness clothed in the most moving language of song; and the beautiful Song of Songs by King Solomon declares the future honors of the Messiahs' Kingdom "in a strain which poetry can never equal."*

At that triumphant period when the fair fabric of the universe was called into existence, "the morning stars sang together;" and St. John. in his Revela-

* Bishop Horne.

tion, not only describes the chorus of the eternal world, but repeats the very anthem in which their praises are expressed.

Moses and the Israelites "*sang a song*" of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the host of Pharaoh; Deborah the prophetess "*sang*" unto the Lord for the triumph over Sisera; and the Psalmist's resolution seems expressive of the general feeling of the devout—"I will praise the Name of God with a song."

Our Saviour, in "singing a hymn" with his disciples, attaches to this mode of praising God a peculiar sacredness and commendation. Paul and Silas were "singing praises unto God," when their prison doors were opened.—We are informed by a heathen writer that the persecuted Christians assembled before day-break to sing a hymn to their God and Saviour;* and St. Jerome informs us that in his day "the gilded roofs of the Churches shook with Halleluiah."†

"Is any merry?"—He is exhorted by St. James, as the most rational employment of the thankful, to "sing Psalms." St. Paul's resolution is, "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also;" his exhortation is in a similar spirit, to "teach and admonish one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs;" and we have this most animating invitation from the sweet Psalmist of Israel—"Sing praises to God: sing praises unto God our King, sing praises: for God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding."

But to these appeals shall we turn an inattentive ear? In the holy exercise of our religion, shall we be deaf to the voice of the "charmer, charm he never so wisely?" When the fire of patriotic virtue is kin-

* Pliny Lib. x. Ep 97. "*soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmen que Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem.*" † Vid. Shepherd vol. 1. p. 103.

dled up by the magic breath of heroic song—when the bosom's wildest passions sink and die away beneath the charms of music ; shall Religion be despoiled of the same strong ally to waken in the soul the hallowed warmth of piety, and elevate the spirit to the throne of God ? And ah ! when heaven-descended music is made so oft the pander to man's unholy appetites—when it is employed to heighten the fever of dissipation and stimulate the intoxications of sense ; shall we not enlist its best powers in the service of the eternal God ?

If music have its charms in the common cares of life, and like the unhappy Saul, we allay the disquietudes of the soul by the blandishments of song ;—if the light trilling air and the mirthful measure restore the drooping spirit to cheerfulness and joy ; shall the mourning penitent and the afflicted believer refuse to touch that chord of sacred minstrelsy which will vibrate in tranquillizing sympathy with every distress and every sorrow ?

If, in the social assembly, it be the talent and the ambition of many to bring into exercise the attractions of music ;—if, there, some light, some trivial theme will employ that skill and awaken that influence ; shall the same talent be unexercised, the same energies be dormant, the same tongues be silent, when the claims of our heavenly Father's unspeakable love invite us to “come before his presence with a song !”

If, again, Religion here claims only the tribute which is due to her ; if she hath been the parent and the preserver of the fascinations of music ; if in her sacred books we find the earliest specimens of poetry ; and if, when ignorance and barbarism had well nigh swept away every relic of learning and taste, the knowledge and the practice of music was pre-

served by the votaries of religion;*—shall we not hear and obey her maternal appeal by consecrating to her service the first-fruits of the science she has preserved and improved!

The services paid to God are, indeed, imperfect without the accompaniment of sacred song. The “melody of the heart,”† if such exist, will seek for vent in the voice of thanksgiving; and the tuneful hymn of praise will prove the best corrective, when the soul is prone to slumber and the spirit to languish. And I would ask, who is there possessed of a spark of the holy warmth of religion, that has not experienced an inexpressible elevation of soul, when the “voice of a great multitude” was employed in making “a joyful noise unto the God of our salvation?”

“If indeed”—as has been well observed‡—“the heart be really affected by a sense of God’s love in Providence and Grace; if redemption be a scheme which occupies the thoughts and rivets the attention; while these form the matter of our praises, how can any one remain dumb? We might expect that, as our Lord said to the Pharisees, ‘If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.’”

O my Brethren, may *we* never be chargeable with this ingratitude and coldness; but let us obey the appeal of the Psalmist: “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so—sing unto him, sing psalms unto him—sing praises unto his Name, for it is lovely.”

* Vid. Bishop Porteous’ Sermon at the Anniversary of the Sons of the Clergy.

† Eph. v. 19. ‡ Revd. F. Close, Cheltenham.

SERMON VI.

ON THE COMMUNION SERVICE, AND CONCLUSION.

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MATTHEW VI. 9.

After this manner, therefore, pray ye.

I have already remarked that, in all acts of praise, the custom enjoined by our Church is to *stand*—the propriety of which, in the Singing of Psalms, has the same approbation and the same sanction of Scripture. The Levites, in exhorting to these exercises of praise, exclaimed, “*Stand up* and bless the Lord your God”*—the “great multitude” of the blessed in heaven are represented by St. John as “*standing* before the throne, and crying with a loud voice, Salvation to our God;”† and the same Apostle tells us that they “who had gotten the victory over the beast, *stood* and sang the song of Moses and the Lamb.”‡

After we have thus “stood to thank and praise the Lord, and have sung unto Him with the voice of a Psalm,|| the worshippers of God are directed to “kneel before the Lord their Maker,”§ and commence the Service of the HOLY COMMUNION. This service is opened with the sublime language of our Saviour himself; his own most perfect and comprehensive prayer is first employed to lead our hearts to the repentance so peculiarly suitable to this solemn part of our Service, the preparation for the Lord’s Supper. The participation in the elements commemorative of the sacrifice of Christ, it is proper to ob-

* Nehem. ix. 5. † Revel vii. 9. 10. ‡ Rev. xv. 2. 3. || 1st Chron. xxii. 30. Psalm 98. 5.

§ The Priest is directed by the Rubric to *stand*; “as a sign,” says Augustin, “of the Resurrection at the time of Easter; whence also on all Lord’s days, that practice is observed *at the Altar*.” Mant in loco.

serve, originally made a part of the pious exercises of every Lord's day. The expression, indeed, "upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to *break bread*,"* is universally interpreted as alluding to the Lord's Supper; and we have testimonies to the same effect in writers living near to the Apostolic times.† Although this excellent custom hath been now for many centuries in disuse, yet, as has been well observed, the Church has retained a part of the Office in her common Services, even when there is no Sacrament, as a memorial which might be useful, of the primitive practice.‡

To the Lord's Prayer succeeds an ancient, beautiful and universally admired Collect for purity of thought and life—a Prayer which we cannot use without noticing its agreement with the admonition of the Psalmist, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath *clean hands* and a *pure heart*." As the people of Israel were to be purified before the publication of the Law from Mount Sinai;|| so must our "hearts be cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit," before we are in a suitable disposition to hear God's holy Commandments.

When the mind reverts to the awful circumstances which attended the delivery of the TEN COMMANDMENTS, and dwells on the equally awful obligation by which we are bound to "observe and keep" them, we shall readily admit the propriety of their introduction into the course of our religious offices; although our Church, in thus appropriating them, has been directed by no precedent of ancient or modern usage. § As, in our Baptism, we solemnly covenanted to "keep God's Commandments," it is right that we should be

* Acts xx. 7. † Vid Ignatius Epist. ad Ephes. c. 13. and Pliny Lib. x. Ep. 97—where the expression, "*se que sacramento, &c*" is generally supposed to allude to the Eucharist. ‡ Archbp. Secker. || Exodus xix 10 14 § Vid. Shepherd Vol. ii. p. 174; and Bp. Cosins in Mant. But it appears that other Churches have subsequently adopted the practice.

frequently reminded of them by the open rehearsal of their solemn requisitions; and inasmuch as it is an essential tenet of our Church that "no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called moral,"* she is justified in the custom of thus causing them, by their frequent repetition, to be "for a sign upon our hand and as frontlets between our eyes." Upon the rehearsal of each Commandment, respectively, by the Minister, the Congregation are instructed to offer up a Prayer for *Mercy*, because we have daily and hourly transgressed these Commandments—as well as a supplication to Him "who worketh in us both to will and to do," to *incline our hearts to keep his Laws*. The short Prayer annexed to the tenth Commandment, "write all these thy laws *in our hearts*,"† is in correspondence with the doctrine inculcated by our blessed Saviour in his Sermon on the Mount‡—that *his* followers are not to rest satisfied with a mere literal observance of those Commandments, but to regard and fulfil the spirit of them: and to control and suppress every emotion or propensity which may indirectly lead to their violation.

For the KING, as the guardian not only of our temporal welfare, but of the true religion established among us, we are next directed to make supplication. It has been remarked that the introduction of this Prayer after the Commandments is highly appropriate; because the Laws of the land, whereof the Sovereign is guardian, are watchful, generally, at least of the literal observance of these "tables of the testimony"—and it becomes us to pray earnestly that this watchful care of God's honor and the people's welfare may never be omitted. Here, also, in this distant appendage of the dominions of our Sovereign, we fitly make intercession for the King's Representative, the **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR** of this Province;

* Art vii. † Jeremiah xxxi. 33. ‡ Math. v. 21, 27, 33.

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that he may be actuated by the spirit of divine grace in the exercise of the authority committed to his charge. To this duty we are directly admonished by the exhortation of St. Paul that supplications be made not for the King only, but also for *all that are in authority*.*

After these Prayers, the COLLECT FOR THE DAY is repeated: and to this succeeds two portions of Scripture; the first generally selected from the Epistles, the other uniformly from one of the four Gospels. This manner of reading a portion of the Epistles and Gospels is very ancient—certainly not less than one thousand three hundred years old as regards the Epistle, and much more ancient as respects the Gospel: a circumstance true not only of the custom of reading them, but, in many instances, of the very *selections* at this day used. They have been thus selected with a reference to the particular period of the religious year then celebrated:—the Gospel containing some account of our Saviour's life and doctrine appropriate to the season, and the Epistle being so chosen as to illustrate and enforce the substance of the Gospel. Like the Baptist to our blessed Saviour, the one is the harbinger of the other; the Epistle "prepares the way of the Lord"—the Gospel presents the Lord himself. For this reason, a particular distinction is shewn to the Gospel—manifested in the custom of rising up and standing during the reading of it. While the words of the *Servants* are rehearsed, we are permitted to sit; but when the language of the *Master* is repeated, we are justly called upon to stand. Nay, more than this—we are invited to glorify God for these good-tidings; and as immediately after their first promulgation by the Angel, a Heavenly Host ascribed "glory to God in the highest;" so we, when the holy Gospel is announced, usually†

* 1st Tim. ii. 1, 2.

† This is merely a *custom*—not prescribed in the Rubric; yet justified, we trust, by the reasons here assigned.

make this acknowledgement—expressive of the like gratitude—"Glory be to Thee, O Lord."

As in the preceding Services, the Creed is recited after reading the Scriptures, so at the conclusion of the Gospel in this Service, we again make profession of our faith, by repeating what is called the **NICENE CREED**. This creed was chiefly composed at the celebrated Council of Nice in the 4th century, where a very large number of the Bishops and other Clergy of the Church were assembled with the design of counteracting the baneful heresy of the Arians. It is for this cause that so express an assertion of the divinity of the Son and Holy Ghost is made in this Creed. These essential articles of the Christian Faith were denied by the Arians in those days; and as they are still combated by the Socinians and Unitarians in our own times, the caution against their dangerous tenets is very properly maintained, by the constant repetition of a Creed so directly asserting the Scriptural and important doctrine of the Trinity.

The Nicene Creed concludes the common order of our devotional services on the morning of the Lord's Day:—and, my Brethren, it concludes the task I have undertaken of elucidating and recommending our inestimable Liturgy. Should the humble efforts I have made have caused any one here to dismiss a prejudice he may have entertained against these hallowed Forms, or led one other to an increased veneration of the manner by which he worships the God of his fathers; I shall feel a happiness which only waits for completion in the assurance that it has promoted in all a more careful attention to the *spirit* of our Liturgy—a more hearty participation in all its offices—a sincerer effort to "pray with the spirit and to pray with the understanding also."

We cannot overlook the fact that there are some who allege as hindrances to the devotedness of heart

and voice so earnestly recommended in the offering up of our common supplications, the frequent repetition of certain portions of the Service, and especially of the Lord's Prayer. But to this objection we may propose, as a general reply—that the common order of the MORNING and EVENING PRAYER, the LITANY, and the COMMUNION SERVICE were originally *distinct Services*, and performed at different hours of the day; on which account, it was not only natural but proper that similar petitions should recur, and especially that the admirable Prayer of our Lord should be frequently repeated. As, without this, no portion of our offices would be complete; so, in the common Morning and Evening Services, we use it both after the general confession and immediately before the commencement of our petitions for our various wants: it is rightly introduced towards the conclusion of the Litany as a “complement which fully perfecteth whatsoever may be defective therein;”* and as we have already shewn, it most judiciously takes the lead in the Communion Service. We may add that, by its frequent use, the unlearned or such as from inability to read cannot join fully in the Service, are enabled to participate jointly in petitions which comprehend the substance of all our prayers; and that, for the same reason, the lisping voice of childhood may unite in the common offerings of supplication and praise.

Should any complain of the *length* of the Service in consequence of the conjunction of these offices according to the present usage, we may plead, as an obvious justification, the *conveniency* of their being performed at once in preference to an adherence to the original intent and custom. Nor will the truly devout ever feel a weariness in participating in the

* Hooker Book v. 35, where see the quotation from Tertullian.

whole of a Service which has so much to recommend it to the veneration of sincere Christians ; and if we call to mind the long continued devotions of the primitive worshippers, as evidenced by many of their early writings, and above all, the example of him who continued "whole nights in prayer," we shall be more unwilling to convict ourselves of lukewarmness and sloth in complaining of the length of our devotional offices.

Far less will any such objection be entertained or uttered by those who will acknowledge the high claims of our Liturgy to reverence and esteem, as "speaking the words of truth and soberness"—who will confess that the harmonious intermixture of praise and prayer and hearing of the word of which it can boast, enables the devout Christian to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Such, indeed, is our **BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER**:—and were we to pursue the inquiry beyond the usual order of the daily Service, we should find no less to make us regard it with admiration and affection ; as a manual, indeed, which is associated with the dearest sympathies of our nature. There we are instructed—and how pathetically, the pious Communicant can testify—how to approach the altar of our Redeemer and partake of the symbols of his dying love. There we are directed—and how impressively, the fond parent can feel—how to enlist the new-born child into the service of his heavenly Master. There we have a remembrancer of that conjugal union with which many of the purest joys of mortals are entwined. There the Christian mother, escaped from the pangs of death, is invited to the courts of the Lord's house, and in the fullness of a grateful heart, to "pay her vows in the presence of all his people." There the herald of spiritual consolation is furnished with glad-tidings to the sick and the stricken of God. And

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there the mourners at the grave, in tones of exquisite pathos, are admonished not to be as those that "sorrow without hope," but to look, with unshaken confidence, to the day of the Lord when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality."

But on these offices of our Prayer Book—all equally interesting and equally beautiful—I am not prepared, at present, to enlarge. On some future occasion, the subject may be resumed and the remaining services of our Liturgy considered and explained. I shall conclude with exhorting you to "hold fast" in your affections and in your practice, "this form of sound words;" and while you employ it as your companion to the house of God, regard it, too, as the bulwark and the safeguard of our venerable Church. Outward calamity may humble her, and all the common causes of decay may conspire to bring her external fabric to the dust; but, in her Liturgy, she keeps within herself the spirit of revival—the seeds of resuscitation to life, to glory and to blessing. Her principles and her doctrines are treasured there; and "without controversy," they are "the principles of the doctrine of Christ."

Should her guardians slumber and neglect her—should her children leave her for "strange vanities" and "strong delusions;" her Liturgy remains a point of rallying and a centre of union. It goes forth into the world the handmaid, and the companion of the Bible. It bears upon it the impress of the Word of God—it has the light of heavenly Truth reflected in all its brightness, upon it. Only then, when *that* light is extinguished, will our Liturgy be forgotten and perish.

AFTER THIS MANNER, THEREFORE, my Brethren, PRAY YE; and the devout petition will ascend to the throne of God as "incense from the evening sacrifice." Your faithful fulfilment of this duty will add the "pleasantness," of religion to every wordly joy,

and impart its "peace" when wordly happiness forsakes you. May the words of piety which constitute the form of our public devotions ever animate in life and afford consolation in death ; that when the trumpet of the Archangel shall summon the quick and the dead to Christ's tribunal, we may ascend to heaven with purified souls and glorified bodies, and there renew the praises of Jehovah in the eternal Song of the blessed : " ALLELUIAH, Salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God ; ALLELUIAH, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

FINIS.

ERRATA.



- Page 13, Line 8, for *perseverence*, read *perseverance*;
" 16, " 9, for *invite*, read *incite*.
" 36, " 5, for *excitement*, read *incitement*.
" 39, " 12, for *inverted*, read *inserted*.
" 43, " 10, } for *succeeds*, read *succeed*.
" 71, " 8, }
" 75, " 12, for *concluded*, read *conclude*.

* * * It would have been gratifying to the Author to have annexed to this work a *List of the Subscribers*; but as some of the returns have not yet been made, and others were forwarded containing merely the number of copies required, without the Names of the persons desiring them, he is compelled to relinquish this idea. He, however, begs to say that the Patronage this work has received has been very extensive—for which he repeats his grateful acknowledgments to the Public generally, and to those gentlemen particularly who have solicited and procured subscriptions for Copies.